Let nothing you dismay

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by AtticusCrete

Summary

Although the world never sleeps sometimes it feels like there are brief interludes of peace. Will and Hannibal experience their first Christmas and first New Year together.

St Stephens Day is just as interesting.

Ok, who said anyone wanted to play human Jenga?

Set around the Lawrence Wells case.

Also involves the mighty plotting of Abigail Hobbs.

Mischa and Chiyoh feature in chapter six.

I suck at summaries.

Notes

Wellcome to the Dr Plushy Pants (blame Beverly Katz for that sobriquet) AU, canon is a distant cousin twice removed. Roughly chronological as mapped against the series. Though with lots of event addition. Some people, relationships, crimes and behaviour the same. And some not. Started as two or three one shots, that put in a bid for expansion, 'me me please over here', like an over eager child in class (was that You at school? You can tell us, smart is Sassy), currently going back and forwards to fill in and amplify and try and even out the most obvious continuity errors. Ha. Good luck with that. It's my 19th day of writing and I've a lot still to learn!

Ha. Finally filled in all the gaps. Continuity alsmost sorted. Starts with 'a terrible name for a museum'

Tidings of comfort and joy

The run up to Christmas has been hard for both of them. Will had honestly thought he might have destroyed any hope he had with Hannibal. Hannibal felt overwhelmed by what had taken place but had grimly held on to order by continuing with the preparations for his annual Christmas party.

And now.

Hannibal is awake, tired, but elated. They've slept all the way through the day, it must be close to evening again. Their body clocks utterly disrupted by the ridiculous hour when they had gone to bed, and the even more ridiculous hour when they'd finally gone to sleep.

Will is still asleep. He's lying on his front facing Hannibal, breathing slowly. He looks calm, all the edges smoothed out. Hannibal is reluctant to leave but thinks coffee and something to eat might be in order.

He's back in twenty minutes. Will is still asleep. Hannibal puts the tray down on a side table, and climbs onto the bed. 'If you have brought me coffee I will worship you for ever, more if there is something to eat too' Will hasn't moved but he's clearly awake. 'Both, actually. I'll let you know when temple opening hours are' Will grins still with his eyes closed. 'What time is it?' 'Late. It's Christmas eve tomorrow', 'ok, I'm going to open my eyes now, you better not have been kidding me about coffee'.

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Several cups of coffee later, a croissant with jam, pain au chocolat, and a small frittata Will looks human, Hannibal as collected as ever.

'Do you have plans for the next few days?'

'For Christmas?'

'Yes'.

'Honestly? I've been trying not to plan for it. I knew I'd messed up so badly I couldn't bear to think about it, no wait, listen Hannibal'

Hannibal look as though he wants to interrupt 'some of it wasn't my fault, no not yours either, not you at all in fact, you were great, ok, you were great. Did you hear that bit?'

Hannibal nods, listening intently

'I've let myself get overwhelmed by work, again, by what Jack wants. I've not felt well for weeks. I've screwed up my sleep patterns. The nightmares come and go, but they're still around. And there have been hallucinations and I've lost time. It's worse than before. Despite the mess. I've been shit to you, I think I made Bev cry, though she won't say, I swore at Jack

(which by the way was when he told me to go home so I know what to do next time I need some breathing space), I broke several plates at home, lots of things have been off kilter. And the cases, they just seem relentless at the moment.

It was ok when I only consulted occasionally, but it's never ending now. The science team got me my own 'go Sassy Science' mug. They want me on the bowling team! I'm a teacher! And I've been in the field every week for all of the last semester. The class is suffering, the students are pissed and rightly so. I've been on the road, what, eight times. And you've been the only good thing in all of that. (Don't tell Bev I said that! She wants to be the best thing) I still almost completely screwed that up' He winds down 'I am very very sorry, for how I behaved, and for what I said.'

'I accept the apology. And I offer mine too. I withdrew emotionally. I found it very difficult to process how conflicted I have felt. That I let you down, and let Jack down. That I compromised your safety. That I did not see the bigger picture and focussed on my own narrow desires. When it became clear I was worse than no help I wanted to cut off. To cauterise the pain. I am not sufficiently adept at humbling myself to know when to admit my own mistakes. And I was concerned about the cost that had, for you. When Budge attacked me it seemed a good excuse to remind myself that emotional and physical self-sufficiency was what had always worked in my life so far. I am not good with my own vulnerability. I am sorry too.'

'Did you hear the bit where I said you were great?'

'I think you are being too generous'

'Ok, how about this then. I did and said shit things, things I regret. You did things you regret too. We might have both lashed out a bit, but here's the thing. We lashed out because there was someone to lash out to. That's almost unheard of in my life. I said before I have friends, if they ask, they're in and they stay. But that doesn't mean there are a lot of them. I sort of feel it's the same for you. You have friends, but how many of them are you this open with, how many of them are you close enough to for it to hurt?'

Hannibal nods, he can see the truth in what Will is saying. He still feels uncomfortable, but he understands the point. It scares him a little too. He thinks it probably scares Will as well.

'My question still stands'

'About Christmas? We can decide together. How would that be?'

Hannibal smiles at that, he takes Will's coffee cup from him. For the first time in his adult life he is seriously considering not getting up and dressed in the space of 24 hours.

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Eventually they agree that Will will stay another night and that they will separate during the day on Christmas Eve. In the evening they will meet again at Will's house and spend Christmas together. Depending on the weather and the dogs they will come back to Baltimore for St Stephen's day. Will has an invitation to something in the evening at Jimmy's to which

they will both go. Unless someone decides to kill someone, then all bets are off. Hannibal thinks of hiding Will's phone. But it may be too soon for another work related misstep.

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Back at Wolf Trap in the late morning on Christmas Eve Will is tidying up. He doesn't go in for Christmas decorations generally but he has a few ideas. He takes the dogs on a long walk and brings back some holly and ivy. He makes a few swags and wreaths and hangs them around the living room. He has found a bare twig with lots of branches and fills an old olive oil tin with earth and sticks the twig into it. He's got some tiny fairy lights which he was going to try for night fishing and he winds them round the branches. He then takes some of his best fishing lures and hangs them up on the branches too, they catch the light as they move. He sets the whole thing up on the upright piano where the dogs can't get caught. It looks surprisingly festive. He adds the Holiday cards he's been given and it now looks like a very Will kind of Christmas.

Underneath it he puts a small package. Even though things had been so bad he'd made something for Hannibal just in case. He's glad now that he did. So glad.

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In Baltimore, Hannibal is putting boxes into the Bentley, mainly food and some wine. He and Will didn't discuss the minutiae of menus so he's taking a bit of a chance. But if they are to go to Jimmy's in a few days time he estimates that there won't be many leftovers.

He's also wrapped a parcel. For Will. Though things had been painful he had lived in what he had thought to be a faint hope that somehow they'd find their way back to each other. And he's glad that they have. So glad.

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The night before Christmas is filled with tenderness, and passion, nosey dogs, and classical music, food, and wine, and each other.

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Over breakfast the next morning they talk about Jimmy's party. Will has texted Bev to check if a plus one is allowed. Bev returned the text saying that dogs don't count as plus ones. So that's alright then. Will texts Jimmy, just in case. Jimmy texts back about dogs too. Bev got there first.

They go out for a walk, a long one. The dogs run around delighted to have two two-legs one of whom has brought dog toys and one of whom has brought sausage. They talk about Christmases they remember. Will is tense to see a group text from Jack but it's just wishing the team a happy Christmas.

Back at the house they start on preparing a simple lunch. They'll eat something more later. Hannibal makes a fish soup with twelve kinds of fish, Will makes a winter salad, and together

they make some bread rolls. It's simple (12 kinds of fish? Hannibal has a different view of what simple is to Will) and delicious.

They drink coffee and then solemnly give each other their Christmas presents. A fine tradition to establish between them for Christmas afternoon. When they've each unravelled string and unfolded paper they are both quiet. Will has a warm knitted sock with things in it - oh, a Christmas stocking. In it is the other sock, a bright shiny Indian Penny from the late 1800s, an apple stuck with cloves, a tin cup with his name engraved on it, a pair of knitted red wool mittens, a striped candy cane, and a first edition of 'the Long Winter' by Laura Ingalls Wilder. His eyes are brimming as he looks to see how his own gift is received.

Hannibal has a book. It's bound in a dark red velvet with hand marbled Ebru end papers. In it Will has hand written poems and Bon mots, all of them favourites of his that he's gathered together in this one off collection. It's so intimate and revealing. Frost, Dante, Leonard Cohen, Montaigne, Epicurus, Goethe. Eclectic. An offering. Hannibal feels overcome by it. He looks up at Will, and sees a reflection of what he feels, love, gratitude, home.

Born upon this day

Chapter Summary

Jimmy's St Stephen's Day Party involves human Jenga. Oh why oh why?

'Why is the code on your phone 25/12/1642?'

'What?'

'Your cell. I borrowed it the night we went to Tosca. Kidnapped it, on Beverly's instructions. You told me that was the code'

'Oh. Yeah. Sure. Isaac Newton's birthday. Written the British way as he was English. It's an interesting date because the calendar changes during that period so you have to decide if you're using the calendar in use when he was alive or the one we date things by now. It only makes a difference of 14 days or so. But because he was born on Christmas Day in one year and just a non Day in January the following year, I like it, it means I remember it. You did too.'

'I was intrigued'

'Still intrigued?'

'Definitely.'

'Intrigued enough to make me coffee?'

'I walked into that didn't I?'

'Little bit'

Hannibal makes a hugely put upon face and goes to make Will coffee. Will just catches him with a pillow before he's out of the door and then hops off the bed sharpish and shuts himself in the ensuite.

'You'll have to come out sometime Will'

Will grins to himself and turns the taps on 'bring the coffee back with you, I'm running us a bath' he calls through the door

Though there is no one to see him Hannibal rolls his eyes, he has utterly brought this on himself. He is a besotted fool. How lucky he is.

When he gets to the bottom of the stairs he goes to pick up his tablet, which he takes into the kitchen. He's been meaning to send Mischa an email

*my dear. Happy St Stephen's day. I hope you are both well? We remain content. We shall be going to a party this evening. With one of the science team. I expect it to be entertaining and possibly peculiar.

They've some kind of secret santa going on and I gather it's regarded as a highlight of the year. Given the last few weeks I can't imagine how any of them have found the time to do something for each other but apparently I am wrong.

Will has used his time to create something for his nominee, as well as the gift he made me. I shall bring it with me at the end of the week.

Will seems content that we won't be together on New Year's Eve. He suggested we try for a Chinese New Year, or Pagan, or Islamic or any of them. I take his point.

One of the things we might do, apart from a walk on New Year's Day, and maybe a meal with Tonio and Julia, is spend a little time planning how we shall finally introduce you to Will. I know you will be glad when this is finally resolved. I think I am ready now to facilitate this. With much love, Hannibal

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In the bathroom, sitting in the claw footed tub Will smiles. Somehow they have navigated their way from The Party to Christmas Eve, to St Stephen's Day and soon it will be New Year. He has a surprise for New Year. He really hopes Hannibal likes this particular surprise. It's a teeny bit of a risk. Ok. It's not a teeny bit of a risk. It's a big risk. But he and Mischa and Chiyoh are taking it together. Chiyoh took a certain amount of convincing but in the end she agreed that maybe Hannibal needed some encouragement.

Mischa and Chiyoh are already at Chiyoh's cabin, up the coast near Rhode Island. Indigo, the local woman who looks after the house when it's empty has opened it up and made sure it's aired and that there are clean linens and bedding. And that there is a reasonable stock of food. Will talked to Tonio and Julia from the local cafe/bar about ordering some specialities when they were down in Baltimore for the Christmas party. They too have some nice ideas. Will has told them it's a secret, a surprise. Julia patted him on the cheek. 'Oh you'll be so good for him. He's going to hate you'

As far as Hannibal is concerned he's going to spend New Year with Chiyoh and Mischa in the cabin. It's something they've done a number of times, Chiyoh liking to see her friends there during the festive season. Usually they are together for Christmas but this year Mischa argued for going earlier.

Her ideal was that Hannibal and Will would work it out in time for them to have Christmas together. Even better would have been if Hannibal and Will hadn't fallen apart and then her silly brother would have had enough time to finally tell Will about her, and Chiyoh, in time for all of them to be together at Christmas. As it is she's making the best of it. It will be like a second Christmas.

As most of the arrangements have been made by notes stuck in the pages of Alice Through the Looking Glass in the library on the ground floor and Will didn't even see Hannibal for the final two weeks in the run up to Christmas it's a miracle they've managed the plan as well as they have.

At one point Mischa thought she might have to tell Hannibal. But a last minute note left in the book just as they left the house had to hold all the arrangements in place and then they all just hoped for the best. Will is supposed to arrive on New Year's Eve. Hannibal is travelling there on the 30th December. Chiyoh is worrying about the weather. But Chiyoh always worries about the weather.

Will is worrying more about murder. Christmas is often a spike point in the year. Usually it's just run of the mill (he winces as he thinks this, it's never run of the mill) domestic murder. Family time and compulsory socialising and high expectations being a recipe for disaster.

But just occasionally someone turns the violence outwards and they have a spree killer or a particularly nasty one off, or one that is part of a series. Every year Jack worries about the Chesapeake Ripper. It's been more than two years. But he likes to depress himself with his thoughts of his own great white whale.

Will thinks now that Christmas Day itself is past all he needs are five days clear and he'll be fine. He knows as the week goes on he'll be trying to lose his phone or forgetting to charge it or accidentally on purpose turning it off completely 'oh dear? Is that what that button does? Oops'.

He splashes around in the bath a bit. Oh this is nice. He could get used to this. Fa la la. Hannibal finally returns with the coffee, he hands Will the mug, it's good coffee, Hannibal makes good coffee, he could get used to this too. Next Hannibal slowly disrobes. Dressing gown, pyjama shirt, pyjama bottoms. Will puts the coffee down on the floor beside the tub. Hannibal gets into the tub. It's a good size for two people. Will thinks he might never get used to this. In a good way.

An hour later both Hannibal and Will are asleep again in the large, comfortable, and now very untidy bed. Will just remembering to set the alarm on his phone in time for them to get dressed and ready to go to the party. When it goes off it takes him a minute to find the damn thing. Under a pillow, on the other side of the room. How? What? When? At first he tries to speak to the other person. Then he realises it's the alarm tone and not the ringer. By then he's awake and so is Hannibal.

'Sorry.'

'Not at all, I take it that means it is time to become vertical again?'

'Yeah. It is. Do you think I can leave my phone here? Or should I take it. Officially I could get called in. But.'

'Which will make you feel more anxious? That it is here, or that you have it with you?'

'Why do you have to ask such sensible questions. No. don't say anything. I know why. Hmm. I'll bring it. If I don't have it with me I won't even know if no news is good news.'

'An eminently sensible conclusion. I commend you on it'

'Hannibal.'

'Yes my dear Will?'

'Shut up'

'Of course'

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Will smiles at Hannibal. He spent exactly 72 seconds getting ready to go out. Fortunately he knew that wouldn't be the case for Hannibal who has taken exactly 72 minutes. Will enjoys telling Hannibal this very much. Hannibal however is rather irritatingly unphased. He has got to this point in life with some supportive rituals and preparing for a party or event is one of them. Will sits on one of the surfaces in the bathroom swinging his legs whilst Hannibal wet shaves, dries and then styles his hair, brushes his teeth, cleans his ears, washes and then leisurely dresses.

It's a performance in itself and Will likes that he gets the private viewing. It also means he has a good idea of what he will be dismantling later. Hmm. He's impressed with his own refractory period as his cock is making a valiant attempt to be involved again. Hannibal looks at him out of the corner of his eye 'patience, my dear, good things come to those who wait'

'Good things come on those who wait?'

'You're impossible'

'You love me really'

Hannibal is quiet for a moment 'yes. I do'

Will looks at him eyes wide 'really! Really? I thought it was just me. I've been trying not to say it. Even during the stupid hiatus. I kept thinking "oh no I won't get to tell Hannibal I love him. That's so annoying. Why couldn't I have screwed it up after I had. I'd have loved to see his face." But I do, I completely love you.'

He looks carefully at Hannibal's face. It's a mixture of optimism and pleasure, and something a bit tangled, which may or may not be to do with Mischa or their parents, and longing, and maybe something a bit possessive too. Will quite likes that in a twisty kind of way. It's how he feels about Hannibal. So it's good it's mutual.

'Will. I..'

'No take backsies'

'No, no, nothing like that..' Hannibal laughs which seems to get him over the hump of whatever has crossed his mind. 'I was going to be rather more sentimental and try for something more eloquent.'

'I know you're good at eloquent. But sometimes simple is enough. Kiss me a tiny bit, because we ought to go, but I want a tiny celebratory moment, before we go and party like it's 1999'

'If you're going to start using song lyrics to describe our relationship moments might I suggest rather more elegant ones than that?'

'Yeah, it'll be Puccini next time, but you knew it right?'

'I beg of you, lets go'

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Although he's been to Jimmy's house it was for a quiet meal and sit about. Now there are people spilling out of the door and onto the lawn, Will hopes all the neighbours got an invite. The dormice wreath thing from the 'Bevergram' photo episode is on the front door, it has little Christmas lights strung though it. How did he get it out of evidence?

Inside they run into the usual suspects, plus Jimmy's twin brother, who of course they think is Jimmy at first, until they meet his wife. Wow that could have been a whole Mr Rochester thing. They are very similar indeed. They also now realise that it was Chilton that Jimmy had disappeared with after The Party. Hannibal goes to talk psychiatry with him as Will sidles up to Jimmy.

'So, nice Christmas present then?'

'You can talk'

'Oh. Oh yeah. High five?'

They laugh at each other. 'What time is secret santa and how do you manage all the people who weren't involved?'

'It's easy really, I've got this lucky dip barrel, everyone not in the secret santa brings something wrapped to pop in the barrel, so everyone gets something to take home. It's become a running joke some things keep getting brought back. There's some awful pot pourri that's been doing the rounds for the last six years. Only once has someone brought something which they also took home with them. His wife said he was so drunk he didn't realise it was the thing he brought and he kept going on about how excellent the taste was of the person who brought it. She still laughs about it.

'Oh, I didn't know. I didn't tell Hannibal'

'It's ok. I told him ages ago. He gave it to me for tonight when I was at The Party. He said he might not come if you and he didn't work it out, but he was optimistic. Err maybe don't tell him I said that?'

Will looks at him amazed

'When did he say that? Jimmy? This is my threatening face.'

'Err. Maybe a few days before the party, sorry The Party. I think he was trying to put a brave face on it. I sort of asked him.'

'Ok. Fair enough. I know you're friends. Now tell me where?'

Jimmy's voice gets sort of small, 'you know that night when I said I felt a bit too knackered to go out anywhere?'

Will knows, he was feeling especially wretched that evening. When Jimmy turned down the opportunity to drink his face off It was the night Will made bad choices regarding a bottle of whisky and some jerking off. He nods.

'Err it was because Hannibal came round for a meal with me and Brian.'

'I see.'

'Don't be mad Will. He was dead upset.'

Jimmy is astounded when Will hugs him and then kisses him on the cheek 'you're a lovely man Jimmy Price, thank you for being such a good friend, especially to Hannibal, but in general.'

Jimmy flushes a little, 'thanks Will, that's nice. I didn't say. I was worried it might upset you. I wasn't trying to play sides, just look after people, you know?'

'I do. And you're great at it.'

Jimmy has a little wriggle of pleasure. He'd felt a bit bad about it. In the lab they all know he's a bit partisan to Hannibal and Brian to Will. But that hadn't really mattered until the toxic tarot case. He and Brian had almost had an argument about it. He sort of wanted to tell Will, and rather dreaded it. Now it's done.

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'And so ladies and gentlemen and those who prefer non-binary gendering we have this year's secret santa' Jimmy stands on a step stool so everyone can see him. 'My glamorous assistant' Frederick Chilton gives a little bow 'will now pass round the barrel to all those who aren't fortunate enough to work in the FBI science lab' there's some raucous cheering from the back 'thank you, thank you. I know we have our own fan base here (more cheers) so I give you Senior Agent Jack Crawford (cheers) Dr Brian Zeller (cheers and one cat call) Ms, but hey I've got a PhD why does no one call me Dr. Beverly Katz (wolf whistles) my self (lots of cheers and whistles) and new this year Dr Call me Will Graham (lots of applause and a few whistles).'

As he calls out each name he passes each person a package. Once the barrel has gone round and everyone has something the barrel people open their presents first. The woman who gets

the pot pourri is surprisingly pleased 'oh I hoped I'd get it this year. I'm so glad.' Other gifts include a blow up reindeer, an encyclopaedia of fish (Will looks at it rather longingly), a Sherlock Holmes board game, a large knitted shawl and so on. Nothing too awful. Except for the pot pourri maybe.

Next it's secret santa time. Newest person in the team first so Will is up. He opens the package and it's the pink flannel pyjamas with dogs on that Beverly promised. So it's from her. Probably. Until she says 'oh my gods. I didn't get you, I've got you a pair too!' There's a lot of laughter. She hands him another package. He can see on her face the comment forming about matching pyjamas so he quells her with a stern look. He tries not to look at Hannibal who has clearly had the same thought and who is either laughing or looking horrified. Hard to tell as he's hiding behind a wine glass.

Next it's Brian, he usually gets something useful or practical, and just a tiny bit anonymous. This year however it's a very nice painting set and a voucher for ten classes at a local art college. He's been thinking about painting for ages. He talks about it occasionally and somebody clearly listened. He's a bit delighted.

Jack is next, he holds his package in his hand as though weighing it assessingly. He makes a sort of hmmm, hard to tell face and opens it and laughs it's a really nice travel coffee French press and posh thermos flask and mug. He's always moaning about coffee on the road trips. Solution!

Bev is second to last, inside hers is a large collage poster of Beverly with different members of the team at various events and crime scenes. Looking glamorous, or noble, or hard working, or plain knackered, there's also a small jewellery box which when opened reveals a heart shaped locket with a picture inside of Will, Brian, Jimmy and Jack all standing holding the poster and looking at it as though she is their heart throb. It's very Beverly, and she's momentarily speechless.

Jimmy is the veteran of the team, surviving internecine putsch and internal, feuds for nearly twenty years he opens his present. Inside are two tickets for a weekend away in the Ozarks. He's always talking about down home country style, the booking includes passes to a museum and antique fair. Perfect.

There's a big round of applause for this year's Santa, he'll be hard to beat next year. The party moves on, Will talks to Bella who only teases him a bit. It turns out Jack told her about what happened on the tarot case, so she's kind rather than too hard on him. She's already talked to Hannibal this evening who managed to be all smooth grace and unflappableness. 'Git' Will thinks. He could at least try and be a bit embarrassed.

He notices that Hannibal is standing under one of the many bunches of mistletoe hanging round the house. This too is a Jimmy's party tradition. Some people make bingo cards each year and see how many people they can persuade to kiss them off their card. Jimmy leaves a small pile at the front door, people can pick one up as they come in.

Will isn't really interested in kissing anyone other than Hannibal so he gradually works his way round the room. He suspects Hannibal is utterly aware of what he is doing but he isn't moving, so Will gradually closes the gap. When he eventually arrives Will takes a drink of

wine as Hannibal bends forward and whispers in his ear, he splutters out whilst Hannibal looks both serene and slightly smug.

Will narrows his eyes and determinedly puts down his glass and pulls Hannibal's face to his and kisses him extremely thoroughly. There's low level applause. Hannibal continues to look serene and smug.

Will plots revenge 'there will be a reckoning Dr Lecter'

'Really? Oh good.'

Will smirks. Little does Hannibal know!

There's one of those moments in a party when suddenly there's a lull in conversation, just the normal ebb and flow of social discourse, into it though Jack Crawford expostulates 'oh fuck it' he groans and then holds his phone up. The various FBI team members all slump slightly. A case. Jack hands his phone round the BAU team first. What the very fucking hell. It's a human totem pole. Human jenga. Of course it is. Because they couldn't just have a run of the mill serial, they've got a total whack job. And how on earth did they get the damn thing to stand up?

Hannibal looks at Will, rather less smug now. 'Shall I come, or would you rather I didn't?'

Will scrunches up his face. It's a good question.

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God rest ye, merry gentlemen

Chapter Summary

Human jenga? It's the wrong kind of beach party. Alana is Alana (i.e. Very annoying). Confessions.

Where are we going?'

'Some place called Grafton, it's in West Virginia, at least it's by the sea.'

'In December? Are you kidding? We'll freeze!'

'It's only a few hours away. We won't have to stay there, probably.'

'Yeah, it's how I persuaded Hannibal not to come.'

'Jimmy? Sorry about the party'

'Oh never mind, Fredrick said he'd take over the hosting, I expect some people won't really notice especially if Ed stays on for a bit'

'Is it ever really useful having a twin?'

'Not so I've noticed'

'I've got three siblings, two brothers, a sister'

'Will! No way! Your dad didn't mention them'

'I know. I haven't seen them for a long time. I've got nieces and nephews too. Seven of them'

'Wow, that's like one for each dog'

'Thank you. Apparently that's what my sister said when dad told her'

'What about your mom'

'She's been gone a long long time'

They're quiet for a bit. Just driving...

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'So what do we think this is?'

'Some kind of confession?'

'I think it might be more of a celebration. Of an achievement. The photos look like there's only one recent kill in the whole thing.'

'Can I just ask whether anyone's noticed that the cases we see are basically getting weirder? Or is that just me?'

'It is pretty spectacular.'

'What will we do when we get there?'

'Start at the corners? Like with a jigsaw puzzle? It's what my mom used to say'

'I think there might be too many corners'

'Ok, I can see the Field Office SUV let's find out where we should park up.'

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'Hannibal? Hey? Are you back home? Ok? Is that what the funny noise is? Sounds entertaining. No, we're just waiting to get onto the scene, it's still a bit dark. Yes. No I brought a hat, and gloves, yes, and a scarf. Thanks mom. Yeah, I know. Sorry. No, Bev drove. That's right. Sure. Alright then. I love you. Bye.'

Will thumbs off his cell phone and pushes it into an inside pocket. He realises the other three are looking at him 'what? Oh. Right. Yeah.' He blushes rather prettily.

Bev gives him a little squeeze.

.....

Jack turns to everyone and shouts 'ok then, let's clear the scene. Will it's all yours.'

Will walks towards the extraordinary human jenga. Closes his eyes. Lets the design unfold before him.

"Every death is a different note, made to look like something else. A composition. The killer didn't care about his method all he cared about was the simple fact that these people die. He wanted to remain unnoticed. To be a ghost until now. This is my story, this is the beginning, and this is the end. My grand finale. This is my design."

He comes to. Aware of three faces peering down at him. He's lying flat on his back on the sand.

'I'm alright. I'm alright. Why am I down here? Why have I got an emergency blanket? And can I just say the sand is damp and cold. I'm fucking freezing! What the hell happened?'

'You know when women do this sort of graceful faint by crumpling at the knees and go all floppy?'

'Yeah. Kind of. I think so'

'That was you, about fifteen minutes ago'

'Oh shit. That doesn't sound great. What ever you do, don't tell Hannibal'

'Ah. About that..'

'You didn't?'

'Jack'

'Oh for fuck's sake. I thought he wanted me on this?'

'I think he's got buyer's remorse'

The three of them look at Jimmy

'You know, when you've got something and although you like it you sort of think maybe you ought to take it back. Get a refund maybe, or a swop?'

'Oh that's just peachy. Thanks Jimmy. Someone help me up, my legs are a bit wobbly'

Brian and Bev haul Will to his feet. He brushes the sand off until Bev joins in, slightly too enthusiastically. 'Owww. Gerrof, I can manage thanks. Ok where's Jack?'

Brian nods to the edge of the beach where the parking area is. Will grumbles his way over there.

'Look I'm fine. Honestly.'

'You were out for nearly half an hour. I'm taking no chances. What about that scan?'

'The scan? Oh yeah. I keep meaning to phone Donald about it. It's been a bit. Well you know. Over the last few weeks. Shit, I saw him at The Party, I should have made an appointment then. Did you actually talk to Hannibal or just get his answering service?'

'His answering service. But I'm afraid I might have laid it on a bit thick.'

'Jaaaaack' Will almost wails. 'Which line did you call?'

'Home. I assumed he'd be there, it's only the 27th December.'

'Fortunately he's got patients today. All the people who would normally be seen the last few days. I'll call his cell, or his office or something.'

By now the science team have gathered beside Jack. They all watch as Will walks away clearly making a call on the cell. They watch as he walks up and down for the next few minutes evidently having an animated conversation. He stops and listens for a bit. Then he's walking around some more. Running his hand through his hair. It's kind of mesmerising watching him go back and forwards, like a tennis match.

'What do you think Hannibal might be saying?'

'Oh just something like "when are you going to stop abusing your self like this? Untold damage to your psyche, exposing your self to trauma" You know. The good stuff.'

'True though isn't it?'

'Yeah. Sadly. There must be some way of making this easier on him? Mustn't there?.... Hello Will, anything to feed back?'

'I'm supposed to go home. Hannibal is calling Donald, Dr Sutcliffe. He got the MRI fixed up. He's going to try and get me seen today. See this face?' they all look at him 'this is my why it is good to be single face. Don't try and remember it, you'll see a lot of it I expect.'

'Awww. Will. Don't be like that. What if you are ill? On top of wonky?'

'Great. Thanks for that.'

'Will. Stop it already. Come on....Jack, sadly we all drove here together. So you either get to keep two of us or none, your choice. There's not a lot more we can do while the other techs take the Chinese State Circus apart.'

'What, Bev?'

'Chinese State Circus? They do an amazing human pyramid thing. Bit like this. Brian did you ask the techs to work out how it got put up?'

'Yes. There's a central pole apparently, to give it stability. Still doesn't explain how they managed to erect the whole thing. Must have been a nightmare.'

'It still is a nightmare'

'Yeah. Fair enough. But what I mean is how did they get the whole thing vertical? It must be more than one person. Surely? They probably realised the beach would be pretty deserted over the holiday, so they'd have time. But it is more than one person surely? Like the Angel Maker. We thought there was a second person there didn't we?.'

They all look at the totem pole again. It is depressingly impressive.

'Do you think we can expect copy cats?'

'God. I hope not? Some of these bodies look decades old.'

'Ok all of you. Take Will back. I'll see you at the lab tomorrow. Will, let me know what the doctor says, alright? Sutcliffe I mean? Not Lecter. I know what he says.'

'Alright Jack I will'

.....

'Will, hello. I'm glad Hannibal called me, I've been meaning to phone you, seeing you at the party reminded me.'

'Yeah me too. I forgot to ask. Did you get the results?'

'We did, but there's some anomaly, so we want to run them again. I've got you in to a slot tomorrow morning. We should get the results back within the week. Hannibal have a look at the scan. What do you think?'

'It's not my area, but there's something peculiar. It's either the machine or some thing else. Is Will going to be in the same scanner?'

'No. I'm sending him somewhere else, in case it is the equipment.'

Will is resigned to another exciting interlude inside a loud machine. 'Ok. What time tomorrow?'

As they walk towards the car, Will tucks his hand into Hannibal's elbow.

'I'm sorry if you're pissed. Jack had a bit of a panic. I did faint. But actually I don't feel as awful as last time. I'm not sure that's reassuring for you?'

Hannibal pats his hand and then opens the car door for Will.

'It's modestly reassuring. I'm glad that you're going to have a new scan. I don't like the look of the existing one.'

'I don't feel too bad now. Jack sent me back almost straight away. We've got to be in the lab tomorrow, but that's not usually so trying. Hopefully. Maybe.' He looks at Hannibal's profile. Calm and almost blank. If you don't know where to look, 'I promise if anything happens I'll come back.'

'Thank you.'

.....

Hannibal is sitting in his office writing up his last patient's notes when there's a knock at the door. He's surprised to find Alana.

'Alana, hello. I didn't know we were meeting. Did I forget an appointment?'

'No, no, nothing like that. I just heard about Will up at Grafton?'

'Yes. He's back at home, well, my home. He will have another scan tomorrow. I'm not convinced it's physical but his symptoms are such that it might be at least part of the story. Was there something in particular?'

'I wondered if you'd mind if I dropped in to see him?'

'Of course Alana. I'm not his jailer. He's quite free to come and go. What do you suspect?'

'Sorry, sorry. It's just that, because of the history, I didn't want to visit behind your back. You know.'

'I see. But you do not need to request permission. Will can have anyone he likes to visit, I'm not quite sure I'm getting the point, if there is one? Is there one.'

'No, no. Not really. I just. Well. If you're ok about it?'

'I'm sure he'll be delighted'

She hugs him 'thank you so much'

After she's gone Hannibal frowns slightly to himself, he texts Will

dearest Will, Alana is on her way over, I'd be interested to hear what you make of the mood she is in. Warmly yours, Hannibal (and lo I have managed not to append my family name!)

Will reads the text. He's been dozing in the library watching films on Netflix.

hey, mysterious stranger called Hannibal 'no-name', thanks for the heads up. I'll let you know. xxx Will

Whilst Will is waiting he looks at the coffee machine. Maybe he'll go for tea instead? Seems safer. When the front door bell rings he's just finished making a pot. He goes to the door and lets Alana in. She's shivering.

'Wow, come in quickly. Are you a bit underdressed for the weather?'

'The heater in the car is playing up, which is the warmest room? Can I have a blanket too?'

'Sure, come into the kitchen. I've just made some tea. I'll go and get a shawl or something'

When he comes back to the kitchen Alana has her hands wrapped around a cup and is sitting as near the radiator as possible. He passes her the blanket.

'Thank you so much. I helped myself. I hope that was ok?'

'Of course. So how are you? Did you enjoy the party yesterday?'

'It was fun. Margot is fun. She's had an awful time at home and yet she still manages to be fun! She's awfully impressive.'

'Well you're not so bad you know?'

'Oh Will, that's so kind. You know I am sorry about how it all fell out. I do regret it'

'Ok. Not to worry. You were always honest with me. You never tried to mislead me. There's really nothing to be sorry for'

'That's sweet of you. I did have feelings for you Will. But it would have been reckless to just have an affair'

'Really, it's ok. I think your professionalism would have prevented that if it came to it you know?'

'It wasn't really that. It's that I think you're unstable'

'Alana' there's a warning note in Will's voice.

'Oh I know, but I can't lie to you Will. I know Hannibal is worried that it might not be physical'

'Is he?'

'Hasn't he said? Do you feel unstable Will? It must worry him too?'

'Alana, what I feel is unwell. I have atypical neurology and I'm under a considerable amount of work stress. We had 17 bodies in Grafton today. On top of that it's possible I am ill. It might be PTSD, it might be an imminent breakdown, it might be ongoing trauma. That doesn't make me unstable, it may give me symptoms of instability. But that is different.'

'Oh dear, I've upset you haven't I. I didn't mean to. I'm only trying to be your friend. And tell you the truth. Isn't that what you want?'

'I'm glad you are telling me the truth as you see it Alana. And I appreciate that you're not lying to me. But you don't know all of it. I think it'd be better to end the conversation here. We can talk about something else if you'd like. But this conversation is over. I don't know if you're trying to confuse or upset me, but it is. Can we not. Please'

'Oh dear. I'd better go. I am sorry' they both stand and she's hugs him. He's not wild about it. When he closes the door. He is just a little bit furious. And with the meds he's still on he can't drink anything. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Hey love (Hannibal's heart does a little skip) Alana in very annoying mood. VERY. I didn't do anything irredeemable. But it was close. I won't bore you with it now (don't worry I'll have a good rant later). I'm going to go for a short walk around the park up the road. Maybe kick some stones. Instead of Alana. Love Will

He starts to think of writing a text to Bev, but he thinks better of it. Maybe better to not wind anyone else up. Just bugging Hannibal about it is bad enough.

.....

In the park Will sits on some empty swings. He has a moment of thinking of whether this makes him look like a total saddo, children's swings, alone, two days after Christmas in the late afternoon. Aw so what he shrugs to himself. Why not. He pushes himself backwards and forwards. Remembering the thrill of throwing himself off when he was a kid, seeing how high he could get before chickening out of the great leap forwards. Backwards and forwards, higher still. He closes his eyes.

When he opens them again he's outside Hannibal's office. He looks at his watch, three hours have passed. He's sitting in the car, his car fortunately. The Bentley is still here which means

Hannibal is still doing some work. Hannibal. Will goes to the door and knocks.

'Will! I wasn't expecting you. Anything happened?'

'I was in the park'

'Yes, you said.'

'I sat on the swings. Then I closed my eyes. Then I was here. I don't remember the bit in between. I don't remember getting in the car. I must have, that's how I got here. But I don't remember any of it. Shit. What the hell is happening to me? Alana says I'm unstable, she says you think so too. Is that true? Do you?'

'Will, my dear, I think you're under horrible stress. And please note I think Alana has intensified that stress (yeah, no shit thinks Will), it may be that plus something physical, we won't know for sure unless more tests are run. I am worried that you subject yourself to this. I don't want you to be a martyr, but that's mostly selfishness on my part. I know you do a worthy job. I just happen to think it is not worth your health and safety. I don't think you're unstable. I think, as you have said, you are experiencing some instability, but I think that is quite different. Alana and I are not so similar in our approaches.'

'To me, or in general?'

'Both I would say. And for the present I am rather irritated with her.' He holds a hand out to Will who lets himself be pulled in. Hannibal leans against the edge of his desk and Will leans against him in the v of his legs.

'I am so angry with her' Will grumbles as Hannibal strokes his head 'maybe not angry. Just infuriated. I could feel my tension going up. She wouldn't shut up. I know she's being, actually I don't. I don't know what she hopes to achieve?'

'Maybe she is not wedded to any particular outcome?'

'Apart from winding me up?'

'Maybe not even that'

'You're probably right'

'Only probably?'

'Yeah. Your ego doesn't need any more strokes from me'

'Maybe not my ego'

'Did you just make a sex pun?'

'Is it so unlikely? How could I not with you sitting on me so sweetly and grumbling so prettily. It's very attractive'

'Idiot'

'Your idiot'

'Yeah. S'true'

Will turns slightly and looks at Hannibal. He's got that twinkly look which is basically just the slightest tightening of the crinkles at the corner of his eyes. It sends a little jolt of heat right through Will.

'You know. I used to think about the ladder here'

Hannibal glances around to the ladder that leads up to the gallery filled with books, notes and files.

'This one? Whilst you were still having sessions?'

'Yeah. Right from the start. There was a session, right at the beginning when we both walked round the office and I sort of lay against it. I thought you were going to kiss me'

'I remember. I nearly did. It was a shock to me, how close I had come to doing so. I made a note of it at the time.'

'Really? Why?'

'In case it became a distraction'

'In case what became a distraction?'

'My attraction to you'

'Oh. Ok. Are we doing confessions?'

'If you like. What have you to confess?'

'I saw you at the museum opening and had a bit of a thing for you straight off. I wanted to die when Jack introduced you as my new psychiatrist.'

Hannibal laughs 'I thought that maybe you and Alana were an item, or going to be, at the museum opening. I remember I felt a little pang. I was delighted when it turned out to be you I had been invited in to consult over.'

'Ha. Sod. You just want me for my mind!'

'If only it were so simple. I knew it wasn't only that at all'

'You know when I had to stay those two times? After the two bar disasters? I was so tempted to try something on'

'As I recall, you were dressed rather interestingly the second time. You said I had a lingerie kink'

'Did I? I think I was joking'

'I think so too. But it made me laugh a lot. You know you left those clothes behind when we went to the bookshop the next day?'

'Really?'

'Yes, you spent the whole day and evening wearing my clothes and the scarf I gave you. It was your coat though, the nice charcoal one.'

'So I did. Did I ever give you them back?'

'Not yet. I think I told you to keep the jumper.'

'I did. It's my favourite. What was it like seeing me wear your clothes all day? Wait wasn't that the night you kissed me?'

'It was. It felt like the start of something.'

'We did kiss before'

'I know. But this time there'd been no trauma immediately preceding it. It was different.'

'I remember. I thought I'd fall over. What about the clothes'

'I thought about what it would be like to remind you that everything you were wearing was mine, what it would be like to ask you to return my possessions to me.'

'Did you think that would include me?'

'I know I hoped it would'

'It does now. Hannibal?'

'My love?'

'I'm still thinking about the ladder'

'And what's to be done about that?'

Save us all

Chapter Summary

Ah, yes, the summary, ok
1. More totem pole shit
2. Some more love confessions
3. Beau Graham, an equally adorable older also sexy version of Will
4. Abigail Hobbs
5. Take out
6. Dr Plushy Pants AU

In the evening Will reads a book he'd started on previously. His head is quite bad, he tries his forehead with the back of his hand. Maybe a little warm. He's feeling unsettled. In part by the case. It is a lot of bodies. A complicated narrative. He is bothered that whilst it looks like the deaths are the responsibility of one person it must have involved at least one other to get the damn thing standing. He can't quite get it.

The house feels different now. Chiyoh and Mischa are both gone north for new year. Schroedinger's sister. Here and not here at the same time. His head throbs. Out in the front hall he hears the doorbell chime. He wats for Hannibal to answer it and then hears voices in what seems like a friendly interaction. Hannibal comes into the small library.

'Will, a visitor, one I think we're both glad to see. Though it's a surprise, unless...'

'Dad! No I didn't forget Hannibal. This is a surprise to me too. Isn't it? God I didn't forget dad, did I?'

'No lad. Bit of family stuff, thought I'd let it sort itself without me, thought I'd come here. Should have rung, I went to Wolf Trap first.'

'How did you I know I'd be here, or even Hannibal's address?'

'Called Bev didn't I? Should've done that first too'

'Dad? This is the moment where I don't ask how you've got Bev's cell number. Right?'

'Let me have a few secrets lad'

'Ok. So are you here for a few days?' Will suddenly thinks of new year, ooh, shit, it's the 27th now. Ok that might still be ok.

'Just until the 30th. Got a new year thing to go to'

'Ok great.' Will hopes he looks pleased for his his dad, and not relieved for himself!

'Where are the dogs then?'

'Wolf Trap. We're here because I got called to a scene in the middle of a party yesterday. It's been a stupidly busy day today.'

'Hannibal, you ok?'

'Beau, thank you. I'm glad to see you. As it happens your timing is fortuitous, Will is having a second scan tomorrow. Will you come with us?'

'Sure, that's worked out well. Good timing. Yeah.'

Will looks between them, they're both looking carefully blank.

'Hannibal, did you call my dad to make sure I'd go tomorrow? Dad did you drop stuff to come?'

'I'd be here this week anyway. I just came a bit early.'

'Oh why's that? I thought you said a new year thing?'

Beau mumbles something, 'dad? I didn't catch that'

'Going to a party. New year.'
'Here? Dad?'

'Going with Beverly'

'Dad?'

'Like a friend thing'

'Really?'

'Uh huh'

'Ok. I'm just going to get my head round that a bit. Hang on. Now I've let myself get deflected. Hannibal did you ring my father?'

'I did'

'Did you know he was coming this new year anyway?'

Both Beau and Hannibal look at Will and smile

'Shit. Did Bev tell you?'

'I'm afraid so. I happened to enquire about her plans. I wondered if you were doing something together'

'Because you're not here Hannibal?'

'Regrettably I have extant plans it would not be appropriate to alter'

'Here in Baltimore?'

Will continues to look between Beau and Hannibal wondering if maybe they talk rather more often than he's realised

'No, I shall be seeing Chiyoh at her cabin, as well as others'

'Ok. I hope that's good. Will, lad, what are you doing?'

Will smiles 'possibly dealing with human jenga. Or finally having a lie in as some people like really early mornings. Maybe eating packet foods. Catching up on Netflix. Being a happy introvert. Reading, god reading would be good. Ice fishing, just be glad you don't have to come Hannibal, you can cook the results though. Proper time with the dogs.'

'Beau, what about tonight. There's a guest room if you'd like it? It would save you a drive back to Wolf Trap. Especially if you would like to come tomorrow. Will has to be in the lab first. We could meet him later, maybe the science team too. We could have a leisurely breakfast?'

'And that doesn't terrify me at all' mutters Will

.....

In the morning Will leaves Hannibal and his dad still eating breakfast together when he leaves for the early morning lab meeting. Hannibal kisses him lightly and Will gets a couple of glares in before he's out the door.

'Bad again?'

'Alright last night. He's running a constant temperature though and his head is bothering him. He lost time at the scene, and in the afternoon.'

'You two alright?'

'Yes. I believe all is well. Thank you.'

'I'm sorry about the stuff before Christmas'

'Indeed. It was painful'

'Bev told me a little bit, to warn me about it, in case Will called me'

'Did he?'

'Yeah, but he didn't say anything about it. It's how I knew it was bad.'

'Ah, the absence being notable?'

'He always talks about you.'

'I suspect my friends say the same'

'Have you told him about the other stuff?'

'I am ashamed to say no. In my defence I've been loathe to lay any further stress on him at this point'

'I get that. And appreciate that too. Thanks. Do you think he'll respond badly?'

'I don't know. I think he will be compassionate and understanding. I admit it's a reaction I might find even harder to deal with than horror or hostility'

'Yeah?'

'I'm afraid so. It was very notorious. We all suffered. My aunt and uncle wouldn't speak of it for years. Would barely speak to me'

'But you were a teenager?'

'And I sided with Mischa'

'I suppose I want to say something like but she was a kid, a little kid'

'I know, but my uncle was close to my father, and it hurt him. Older brother, younger brother.'

'Yeah. Sad. Sorry'

'It was a long time ago'

'Still riding it out though? You going to see them at new year?'

'Just Mischa and Chiyoh, and other friends at the cabin.'

'Wishing it could have been sorted, so you could both go? What does Mischa think?'

'She thinks I am underestimating Will's resilience and capacity for, well, she called it love'

'What do you call it?'

'I hardly dare hope'

'Then you're a bigger idiot that I took you for Hannibal'

'I know. I am afraid of my own foolishness. My attachment. And perhaps of being vulnerable to. I do not do so well with that'

'Abigail Hobbs still stirring?'

Hannibal smiles, Beau may not have Will's gift, but he is a perceptive man

'Nicholas Boyle woke up'

'Really? Will didn't say. When?'

'Christmas Day. He woke to a double murder charge. Now we shall all face the prospect of further investigation into all the Shrike cases as well as the deaths of those two girls'

'Any charges against the girl, or her shitty cousin?'

'Will's team is trying to put the case together. And Dr Bloom has me seeing Abigail weekly to try and consolidate her wellness to stand trial, if charges can be brought'

'How's that? Can you say?'

'No details of what she says, but her pathology is fascinating. She is very convincing.'

'Will said she had a good go at fucking things up between you'

'Yes. It has been a trial. She is utterly remorseless about any of her behaviour. She's simply curious about what will happen. It is especially disturbing as she has the air of a fragile fawn'

'Is she a psychopath then?'

'It's what some people might call her. But she has some empathy. She just chooses when to apply it.'

'Will says she's good at getting in people's heads'

'She is.'

'Yours too?'

'I've better armour now. And yes, Beverly did remind me to pay attention to that. They are weakest who do not reckon on being weak. May I ask about Beverly?'

'Sure. Nothing to say really. Well, not nothing. But I dunno. She's younger than Will. I thought she was gay, but apparently that's very twentieth century of me, so what do I know? She's a lot of fun though. Did I freak Will out?'

'Possibly'

'Will he be angry? He'll be something won't he?'

'Hard to say. Two people he loves? Will has an infinite capacity for unpredictability.'

'That's true, even when he was little'

'Some things don't change for the worse.'

.....

'Jack, hey, I'm sorry about yesterday'

'What about yesterday?'

'I wasn't feeling quite myself'

'Well not feeling quite yourself is kind of what you do isn't it?'

'I suppose'

'Is there something you want to tell me? Well clearly there is something you don't want to tell me'

'I just got a little lost yesterday, I'm sorry'

'And where are you today?'

'It got to me, all those bodies got to me, I thought it was a little more obvious than it was?'

'I think lying flat out on the sand is kind of obvious. Beyond that, if there's a problem. You need to tell me. Is there a problem Will?'

'Everything's fine' Will looks a bit shifty but smiles weakly at Jack

'Alright then, what about this scan thing'

'Oh yeah. Sure. Actually I've got it lined up today. My dad showed up yesterday'

'Just like that?'

'Unfortunately not. You weren't the only one doing phoning yesterday'

'Uh huh.'

'They're planning on making sure I go'

.....

'Mr Graham, I'm Agent Jack Crawford. Good to meet you. I hear you're here for Will?'

'Agent Crawford, glad to meet you too. Yeah, he's got a repeat of the scan, just making sure he goes'

'That's good. You've met some of his colleagues in the science team I gather?'

'Yeah. I'm buying them a coffee and muffin each in the canteen in a bit, kind of a between holidays bit of cheer.'

'They could do with it I'm sure'

'You'd be welcome..'

'Kind of you to say so. But I'd cramp their style'

'Ok. Sure thing. Well I'd say happy new year but I guess it's all a bit tight right now?'

'Yeah. It is. Thanks for the thought though'

'You're welcome.'

'Here let me get you a pass and take you along to the canteen, better place to wait than here, why Dr Lecter, hello, I didn't realise Will was wheeling out both heavyweights for this round!'

'Oh I'm more of a bantam weight myself' quips Beau 'but I'm undefeated in my class' he grins all teeth and eyes, he's kind of got the measure of Jack Crawford.

Nevertheless Jack takes them both to the canteen. After depositing them he walks back to his office, passing the science team en route. Bev is just checking her cell,

got our own escort to the canteen, random drinks and food on me, have you got Will?

Bev grins and diverts the bros from their current trajectory and head instead to the canteen. On the way they bump into Alana and scoop her up too. She's not met Beau and may be a little surprised to be included. Although it's a little better she still feels odd about everything. She currently making sense of it by saying she is worried that Hannibal has compromised his professional view of Will in the light of his personal relationship with him. When she said this to Margot, Margot had laughed quite a lot.

Beau is friendly and so like Will, she thinks, it's how he'll be in maybe 25 years time, like Will on a good day, the best sort of day. She's mildly surprised that Jimmy and Brian get high fives and more so that Bev gets a hug and a kiss. Bev sits next to Beau and he gets a casual arm round her shoulders. Alana goggles when Bev actually giggles and blushes.

'So, who's got Will then?'

'He left the lab half an hour ago'

'He knew we were coming here to meet him'

'Could he have forgotten or got distracted?'

No one wants to say it but everybody thinks it, 'or worse?'

'I don't think so, damn, I'll give him a call, see if we can track him down before we panic' Beau gets out his cell phone

'Will? Are you there? where are you? Oh. Ok. Sorry about that. We're in the canteen'

Beau looks mildly embarrassed 'he's been waiting for us in reception'

Everyone looks slightly shifty when Will arrives a few minutes later. He looks round the little group.

'Alright then. Did any of you think there was even a chance I was ok and maybe where I said I'd be when I said I'd be there? Anyone? Fantastic. I think in that case we can generally say I am officially utterly screwed. If not one of you did. And you are lovely generous people. My life apart from you lot is a disaster.

Someone buy me a coffee and muffin before I go and get my head examined, by a medical professional, rather than you lot' he holds up a hand 'and that's including the two people, sorry Brian, three people who are medically trained. Later I'll be back for lab, and then this evening I was thinking take out at my place, with my dad, who seems remarkably unphased by anything I've thrown at him over the last few months. Ok, I'll get the drinks, someone write down the order, I'll just forget.'

Hannibal gets up to assist and the group watch him walk away with an arm loosely round Will's shoulders. His head is slightly bent down towards Will as though listening. They hear Will laugh. For all that he has been increasingly bad over the last few weeks he is still standing, just, and laughing.

When they come back Will just offers the tray of drinks and says 'good luck sorting that lot out, I'll just watch and laugh at you all'

Hannibal slides into the bench and Will squashes in after him, Hannibal smiles slightly. Will knows he is pleased though. He gives off a particular energy when he is, radiates it. Will's interested in this because for the most part Hannibal telegraphs almost nothing, in effect hidden in plain sight.

'I haven't asked, how long will you be up at Chiyoh's place?'

'I shall leave on the 30th and return on the 3rd' neither of them say anything. Will not wanting to tempt himself into letting any clues slip, Hannibal with complicated feelings about the few days away. If things had fallen out only slightly differently he would currently be looking forwards to taking Will away for a few days of peace, and time together.

Even the thought makes him a little warm and he he shifts slightly beside Will. Will responds by resting his hand on Hannibal's thigh, just very slightly higher than a casual placement. Hannibal can't help but wonder if it's a deliberate attempt to unsettle him, and to what end. If it is, it's working. He's distracted enough that he misses Alana asking something and flushes slightly when she sharply repeats his name. Will doesn't move his hand though and Hannibal remains conscious of it throughout the interaction.

.....

As they walk to the car, Hannibal now driving both Beau and Will, he leans towards Will and says 'I believe you did that on purpose'

Will smiles innocently at him 'reckoning Dr Lecter, reckoning'

.....

The scan is tedious even though both Beau and Hannibal talk to each other and to Will all the way through it. When it's done Will looks somewhat wrung out and he spends the journey from DC back to Quantico in the back of the Bentley almost asleep along the back seat. Once back at the FBI headquarters they drop Will off and Hannibal and Beau return separately in their own cars to Baltimore.

Hannibal has an appointment with Abigail Hobbs so he goes there first. This is their first appointment together since Nicholas Boyle woke up. He's more than annoyed when he arrives to find that Freddie Lounds is also there. He wonders briefly if Alana knows.

'Look it's my story, my truth I can tell it if I want to'

'You will be forfeiting not only your own privacy but also that of your parents, and both Dr Graham and I, everything you currently know, the stability you have gained. It all could change'

'Look, I know you saved me. But you don't get to just step in to my father's place'

Hannibal pauses. That is a neat piece of footwork on Abigail's part, he can see Freddie enjoying this.

'Indeed not.'

'Look, I don't actually need your permission, do I?'

'None of us need approval to make the choices we do in life. But I suspect we hope that approval would mean something, from the relevant people'

'Look, Why can't I tell people that they're wrong about me. I was a pawn from beginning to end'

'You know if you open the door you won't control what comes through, are you ready for that, Nicholas Boyle is awake now. He has his own truth of what happened'

Abigail sits up straighter and looks ever more stubborn.

'I have a suggestion, maybe we could all meet, more informally, get Dr Bloom and Dr Graham along too. See if we can agree things between us? Maybe tomorrow evening, if you're willing Dr Lecter?'

'Dr Bloom would need to agree'

'Of course. Abigail?'

Abigail looks at Freddie, there's sure to be an agenda behind it, but that's ok. She can think of lots of ways to make this interesting.

'Ok. I guess. Something to do isn't it? Gets me out of here for an evening'

.....

In the lab later in the afternoon, the team have pretty well hammered out everything about the people in the totem pole, the relationships, though tenuous, the common denominator if that's what he can be called. Eventually they begin to unravel what might be a motive. Will make a suggestion, and they're all shocked when it's clear that he is completely wrong. The DNA tells them so.

Oh. Not at all well then. Will scrunches up his nose. 'Alright then, don't get so excited. Even I can make a mistake!'

There's a big discussion about whether they can wait for final labs to come back before they go and arrest the most likely culprit. Jack, perhaps slightly aware of just how high the shit pile currently is agrees to hold off for the warrants and the morning. He and Will will go to Grafton when they're through. They agree to meet there the following day.

.....

'Alright Bev. No sidling out the room. You know what I want to know'

'Yeah. Alright Will. Look I'll just close the door'

In the living room the rest of the science team, Frederick Chilton, Beau, Hannibal, Margot, Alana, and surprisingly perhaps Bella and Jack are all demolishing the last of a ridiculous number of take out boxes, cartons and tubs. After a lengthy argument at the beginning of the evening the group had finally decided on a combination of Japanese, Thai, and Chinese food, from four different take outs. They'd even hired a taxi to collect all the food and drive it out to Wolf Trap. Initially the driver had thought maybe it was a con, this much food? This long a drive? But he was pretty happy with the tip and the fact that he'd not had to pick up holiday revellers who would then throw up in the back of the cab.

Hannibal sees Beverly close the kitchen door and glances at Beau, he catches his eye. They share a small smile.

'Were you going to tell me?'

'Nothing to tell you really, we talk, we text, we flirt, we tell stupid stories, we moan about our families (not you, idiot), we grumble about shit, it's nice'

'Alright. Nice. Ok. I'm going to ask, because if I don't I'll just wish I had? Is there sex involved? And before you answer I want you to remember you and the bros were betting on which of Hannibal and I is the top or bottom'

'I hadn't forgotten. I wondered if you'd ask. Weird isn't it? If it was my dad and you I'd be weird. Is it easier that you've not really seen him for 20 years and are like friends now too?'

'I don't know. And you've neatly deflected? If you don't want to say that's ok. I'd understand. It's just..'

'Easier to ask me than your dad?'

'I think so'

'Would you ask him?'

Will looks at her. Would he want to know if it was anyone else and Bev? If it had been Alana? Maybe if it had been anyone else he'd just assume yes. But people assumed he and Hannibal had been having sex quite a long time before they did.

'I'm trying to work out why I want to know. I love you both. I'd like for you both to be happy. I'd like for you to have a fulfilling relationship, whatever that looks like for you, I'm not talking about you driving off into the sunset with 'just married' on the bumper sticker (I'm never calling you mom Bev btw), just whatever you agree between you. I dunno. If you were with anyone else I'd elbow you in the ribs and make lewd comments'

'It's just weirder when that could be your dad?'

'No shit'

'You're not bothered about the age thing though'?'

'Why would I be? Hannibal's older than me'

'Yeah. I know, but..'

'Numbers don't really matter Bev. Except when it's illegal'

'I think so too. I didn't plan it. And don't think I haven't agonised over whether it's an age kink and I was just waiting for an older version of you'

'I don't think so. Do I make you, I dunno, get all hot and damp?'

'Ok. Little tiny bit sick in my mouth then. Sorry. Not at all. Ewww.'

'Does Beau?'

Bev smiles at him 'you really want to know?'

Will laughs. 'Ok. So. Unless you've secretly flown off for a weekend and none of us noticed then this is going to be the ....' he trails off 'phone sex?'

Bev smiles.

'Sexting?'

She smiles some more.

'Well fuck me. I think that was too much information.'

'You don't hate me then?'

'I love you Bev. Unequivocally. Totally. Is dad staying with you from when, today?'

'Nah. Stella doesn't go until the 30th, from then.'

'Do you want to have him before then?'

Bev looks at him

Will flushes 'let me re-phrase that. It's the 28th, you could, I don't know. Stay here, if you wanted, I'll be at Hannibal's until he goes on the 30th.'

'Are you setting me up to have sex with your dad?'

'Dear gods in heaven. I might be. If you want.'

'I'll see what Beau says. We good? I wouldn't want to lose you over this, if there even is a this'

'We're better than good. Still not calling you mom though'

She punches him in the arm and they go back into the living room laughing. Hannibal catches Beau's eye again and they both smile a little more.

From satan's power

Chapter Summary

> Abigail Hobbs. Criminal mastermind. The absolute end. Schemer supreme. Sad little not dead girl. Yeah, right?

'Mr Wells, you didn't get to secure your legacy. You murdered it. Your one act as a father was to destroy your son.'

Jack sighs at Lawrence Wells' expression, one of defeat and resignation. He watches as Wells raises his hand and lets it fall against the arm of the chair he's sitting in. Once, and then again. The man shrinking in on himself as he does it. He'd been full of perfect words and explanations and justifications only moments ago. Now it's all leached out of him. Like the blood from his son seeping into the sand at Grafton beach.

Will turns away. Both horrified and also deflated. What right has he? He and Beau barely spoke for twenty years. They're making up for it now. Finally. He thumbs his cell and drafts a text

hey dad, we're done here. All a bit depressing really. Lets go out for a meal tonight, yeah? Hannibal has some stupid deal with Alana and Freddie Lounds and Abigail of all people. I'm staying away. Maybe Bev can come. If you like. I would. Will

Five minutes later he gets a text back,

sounds good lad. You ok? Nothing worse happen?

Will reads it and smiles grateful for how straightforwards it is *see you at 7, can you get me from the lab? let me know..*

He sits back in the car. Jack is driving, it would be his preference anyway but given Will's recent exploits he's taking zero chances. He faintly wonders if Will knows about Bev and his dad. Probably does.

'So. Beverly?'

'Yeah. I can't decide if it's hilarious or terrifying'

'Or maybe somewhere in between?'

'You got that right, I'm oscillating'

'Hannibal got a view on it all?'

'He likes Beau and he likes Bev. As a thing? He's known longer than me'

'How's that work?'

'Turns out they talk to each other on the phone once in a while'

'Oh. Now that would scare me. Bella talking to my mom? Nuh uh.'

'You have no idea' they both laugh a little and Will remembers the many and varied reasons he likes Jack, thinks of him as a friend, even when he is half dead because of him. Or half alive. No one says you're half alive. Why is that? They drift into a fairly comfortable silence and the next 60 miles pass like this.

'Ok. Back to the Lab?'

'Yeah, thanks. Dad's got the car, he'll get me later. We've got dinner plans'

'Including Beverly?'

'Their call. I'm kind of hoping so, then I can be merciless'

'They're more likely to gang up don't you think?'

'I don't know. That's what makes it so interesting'

'Fair enough. You ok today?'

'Not too awful. But that won't last, see you later Jack'

'Hey, one other thing, this means you're not going to this thing of Freddie's'

'Nope. Not in a million years. Hannibal's offered to cook so they're all going to his home'

'You don't approve?'

'Would I have Abigail Hobbs anywhere near Wolf Trap, or even Freddie Lounds? I don't think so? I'm not that kind of crazy'

Jack laughs 'yeah, sure. But Hannibal is a smart man, he must have thought it through?'

'He may think it gives it him a modicum of control. But I reckon if he thinks he's got control of this situation it's only because Abigail Hobbs wants us to think we have'

'You're done with her aren't you?'

'1000% Jack 1000%'

'Alright. Be seeing you Will. Regards to your dad'

'Thanks, and to Bella. I'd say happy new year. I hope it's as good as it can be'

'Thanks Will, for you too.' They smile the conspiracy of two men with burdened hearts.

.....

'I'm sorry Ms Lounds, it simply didn't occur to me that you might be a vegetarian'

'Such a shame to spoil these beautiful platings with all that meat'

So far the meal is progressing, Hannibal would be reluctant to characterise it as pleasant, but it is progressing. Abigail has been either truculent or feverishly engaged and bright. As though she is trying to decide what is her best option in this setting. She's been excused to the bathroom twice. Hannibal wondered if she might stray and he has taken some pre-emptive precautions. But she's gone and returned both times, promptly. He's glad that neither Mischa or Chiyoh are here, though he's sorry about Will.

Will had been utterly clear and concise 'nope. Sorry. But nope'

Abigail had tried a little feint at the start of the evening 'isn't Dr Graham here? Sorry. I thought you two were ok. Is it because Dr Bloom is here? Does that make it awkward?' Alana had intervened at this point 'Abigail, we talked about this'

'What? Ok?! God. Just being friendly. Making small talk. Overreact much?'

Alana tries for her best patient with patients smile. Hannibal thinks it looks more than a little strained. It can't be easy seeing the person responsible for a severe skull trauma. But Alana has never lacked courage. Never. It may be her downfall one day.

Abigail excuses herself again. She's establishing a pattern of behaviour. Leave, return. Leave, return. Leave, return. Next time she'll just leave. Maybe. Or not. Depends. This is a bit boring after all. Freddie seems slightly off her game. Maybe that's the Doc. God does everyone fall for that three piece buttoned up cheekbones thing? Yawn.

And goggles? dr Graham. Why isn't he here? That's a bit annoying. The thing with Matthew planned for later won't work if he's not here. Oh well. Whatever, she can't exactly text him a change of plan. She'll have to leave him to work it out for himself.

She's done what she can in the hall closet, just one or two hairs attached to the lapel of one of the doc's coats at the back of the cupboard. In the bathroom she's lodged a tiny chip of something into the weave of a wastebasket. She's got two bloody fingerprints lifted on a piece of tape she wants to put somewhere. She hasn't found a suitable location yet. She's already stuffed a chip off a buck knife down the back of a passenger seat in the Bentley, the rest of the knife is taped under one of the front seats, kind of handy, and there are hairs in one of the cushions caught in the zip closure.

She's been debating which of Graham and Lecter she'd rather set up for the copycat murders. Maybe it would be even better if she could make it look like Graham set up Lecter or vice versa. Betrayal in the mix as well as direct involvement in murder. Nice. Her careers teacher at school always said it was good to have options.

Betrayal might be worse than being charged, for both of them. That would be sweet. Ok so that means they'll have to do something at Wolf Trap. Or at least Em will. If they're away for new year that could work. She grins to herself. Maybe the fingerprints at goggles' house then? Although she hasn't quite given up on the idea of them maybe both being arrested. It's kind of their fault she is where she is. Ha. Yeah! Make it look like they both did it, then fell out and tried to stitch the other one up. That'd be so pretty. She goes back to the dining room.

For this to work though she has to look just a little bit scared. As though she's realised something and is now... yeah, she can do that. She and Em have already agreed they will stage her disappearance in a week or two. So, she needs to convince Dr Bloom she's a bit scared to just be with Dr Lecter. Ok. Ha. Time to look nervous.

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As they're leaving Alana quietly apologises for the hassle and fruitless exercise it appears to have been. Hannibal sighs a goodbye and goes to tidy the downstairs bathroom. He's about to empty the bin liner when something tugs at his attention. Something. The liner isn't knotted the way he always does it. Does it without even thinking about it. He backs out of the room, wishing Will was here. He goes back to the kitchen and picks up his cell phone.

'Will? Hello? My dear. How has your evening been? Oh? Tonight? Of course. Actually I'm relieved. Of course to see you. No. no. Not at all. I'm fine. Yes, yes. Beau too. Of course'

Hannibal puts the phone down. Will is out with both Beau and Beverly in Baltimore. He's extraordinarily relieved. And he's not entirely sure why he feels this so strongly. What had the parliament people said? There's a storm coming. It's as though he can feel it, a shift in the barometric pressure. Tonight might have been an error.

When Will, Beau and Beverly arrive they find Hannibal looking mildly shaken in the kitchen. Will Looks st him levelly 'what's happened?'

Hannibal looks at Beverly 'I'm afraid I must ask of you something that is of some concern to me. Abigail Hobbs was here earlier, I think you know this?' Beverly nods at him 'she has also been in my car. I suspect' he pauses 'I suspect and rather fear that she may have placed or left some evidence either here or in the car'

'Hannibal?' Will interjects 'how do you know? I'm not doubting you. I just want to know'

'She went to the ground floor bathroom several times. I am concerned she left something behind. I am sorry Beverly we need your guidance. I know you must call it in, probably impound the Bentley' Hannibal sits then on one of the stools looking downcast and miserable. Will goes to him immediately and wraps his arms round him. Hannibal rests his head against Will's side and puts his arms round Will's waist.

'Alright then, this is just bullshit. Beau you make tea. Bev get some brandy, it's in the sitting room. I'll call Jack. Ok Hannibal it's going to be ok'

he runs his hand through Hannibal's hair affectionately, Hannibal shudders slightly

'You were right Will. You were utterly right. I was foolish'

'No Hannibal you were kind. I'm calling Jack now..... Jack? Hey. I know you thought you'd seen the last of me this year. Sure. Yeah. Ok. Sorry. Look the Abigail thing? Yeah. She really is. We thinks she's planted evidence here and in Hannibal's car. Linked to the killings I'd guess, some kind of frame up. Yeah. Yeah. Bev and my dad. Of course. Of course. Ok'

'Alright then. Jack's getting another team out, can't be Bev or Jimmy or Z, we're all too close. He is too really. He might have to hand it off. Ok he said to ask where did Abigail go in the house?'

'here, the dining room, the front hall, the ground floor bathroom. The other rooms on this floor I locked to prevent her straying, or indeed Ms Lounds. And she has been in the back of the car recently'

Will looks at him 'you mentioned that journey to me. That she messed with the pillows a lot.'

Hannibal swallows 'she did. It seemed odd at the time'

'Ok, this is useful Hannibal' Bev smiles at him from the doorway 'clear search area, good job. Sorry, I couldn't get into the sitting room, door's locked'

'of course. Here's the key' Hannibal hands Beverly a key from the set in his pocket. She disappears again and is back quickly with two bottles of brandy, the good one and the exceptional one,

'alright. We've all been through the hallway, let's not go anyplace else until they're done, Beau they'll need your prints for elimination. The rest of us are on file. Will what's the brandy for, apart from the obvious'

'Oh. That's for if we get desperate'

.....

Five hours later the downstairs bathroom, hall, closet and car have all been thoroughly dusted and searched. A buck knife with dried blood around the hilt has been retrieved from the car as has the tip of the same knife. Hairs have been removed from a pillow also from the car. Everything removable from the bathroom has been bagged, the tiles taken up. Luminol has been used liberally but there's no blood evidence anywhere. In the closet three of Hannibal's coats have been taken, one of Will's plus shoes, gloves, scarves and hats. Bev refrains from saying anything about the Russian monstrosity that Hannibal is so fond of. He looks too crestfallen to tease. Will is staying close by. He's not 100% sure what the outcome is going to be. There's no reasons on earth to consider Hannibal a suspect but there probably isn't evidence the other way either. They have been spectacularly outmanoeuvred. Again.

When Jack comes into the kitchen he looks grim 'right, Dr Lecter, Hannibal, you're not being charged or detained. Though I'll need to know if you're going out of state. Ok? None of us are on this. Not even me after this. We've got guys going out to Port Haven to search the Hobbs

girl's stuff. I'm working on a warrant for the cousin too. We've underestimated the kind of long game she's currently playing.'

He spots the brandy and the teapot on the table and slumps onto one of the other stools

'Hannibal, this looks like a big pile of manure. She has been, beginning to end. Someone make me a drink. Please. I'm dying here. Well not exactly. But close' he runs out of steam. Beau nods and makes a new round of drinks.

Hannibal passes a tired hand over his face. The only positive he can think of is that neither Chiyoh or Mischa are here and his hand has not been forced in this respect at least. As for the rest of it? Maybe he has allowed his normal levels of caution to be compromised by his attachment to Will. That he has let himself be distracted. Good! He wants to be. Will is still standing beside him, leaning against him. Just for once Will is the stronger one, he may be leaning, but he is still standing.

'Will' Jack nods a thank you to Beau for the tea 'the guy coming, my step in, he wants you to do your thing. See what you get.'

'Jack, I'm not sure that will work? It can't? I'm too close to it. And even if I do read Abigail off it now will anyone know if I'm being honest or not'

'I know. I said the same. The guy just said he'd know if you were honest or not. I'm sorry. He insisted'

Will shrugs 'ok then. It is what it is. When? Now?'

'When you're ready, or as ready as you can be'

Jack escorts Will to the hallway, Beau, Hannibal and Beverly are left in the kitchen. In the silence Beau asks

'Is this going to be bad? Because it's so close to him? Close to you?'

Hannibal and Beverly look at each other, Beau has never seen the end result of Will doing his thing

'Dunno Beau. Just don't know. Not happened before. I don't think. Hannibal?'

'I concur. Impossible to say, he may get nothing, or far too much'

They listen to voices in the hallway and Jack brings Will back into the kitchen, whitefaced but still standing. Hannibal stands and reaches for him and they lean into one another. Will tries his voice a couple of times

'Ok. Ok. All I got is a total total sense of glee. Doesn't feel like Hannibal at all' he glances at him 'it's malicious and delighted and spontaneous, she may not have planned to do this tonight, she just took an opportunity in front of her. You agreed this yesterday right?'

'Indeed. Ms Lounds suggested it'

'Oh. We're going to have to find out when Abigail and Freddie had the idea. It's possible Freddie was pushed. She's been susceptible before. It's one of the challenges of really smart people. They don't always spot all the other kinds of clever that are going on'

Hannibal doesn't miss that Will doesn't look at him in this moment. Hubris. Yes, he can admit that he might have been guilty of this. It's a challenge when you're used to being the lion in the room. Now he feels like the lamb. Led unknowing to the slaughter.

'Ok everyone' Jack comes back into the room 'clean up crew will be here later today. When it's really morning, rather than just last night going on for ever. Hannibal you can stay here if you want, scene's being released. They're taking, sorry, we're taking the car. Gotta strip out the trunk. I'm sorry about that.'

'I understand. Will?'

'We'll both stay here. Thanks Jack. Dad, you going back to Wolf Trap or what?' Beau looks at Bev who nods 'ok. I'll see you there sometime after lunch. You take the car. Alright? Jack, Hannibal's going out of state, I was going to say tomorrow, but it's today. Up to the cabin near Rhode Island. Is that ok?'

'Yeah, just note the address down for me, or text it or something'

'Sure. I'll call you later too. Will you let us know about Port Haven?'

Jack nods briefly 'alright. Try not to make me see you again until next year?'

When Jack has gone Bev and Beau follow soon after leaving Hannibal and Will finally alone.

'I feel sure you should make the most of the opportunity to say something akin to "I told you so"'

Will looks at him and pulls him closer. He murmurs into his hair

'Sometimes it's like you don't know me at all. Now I'm going to take you to bed to help you remember'

'Dear Will'

'Try not to always have the last word eh?'

'Indeed'

'Hannibal'

Hannibal manages a small smile as Will takes him by the hand and pulls him unresisting from the room, up the stairs to the comfortable and well appointed bedroom. It's the 30th January. Is there anything else the year can throw at them?

Will almost crumbles and tells Hannibal about the New Year surprise. But he doesn't. It's not only his plan after all. So it's not only his call.

When we are gone astray

Chapter Summary

New Year's Eve, was it a mistake to plan a surprise for Hannibal?

Eventually lunchtime comes around. Will spent a couple of hours finding a car suitable for lease for Hannibal to drive north, which could also cope with the predicted weather front moving towards them.

'Thanks for dropping me off. I know it's out of the way'

'Of course. I am very sorry that you are not coming with me. Not only because of the events of the last 24 hours. I would be glad if once I return we might endeavour to have a few days together.'

'In theory I'm off until the 7th. So that sounds like a great plan. And don't worry about new year, I'm just glad that you'll be away from here and all this mess. I'll ring dad and see if they're at the house, will you come in for coffee before you leave?'

'Thank you, I would like that, have you spoken with Jack?'

'Good idea, he might want me to speak to Agent Krendler though. If he can't speak to me'

'He's unlikely to say much even if he knows more'

'I'll find out.... Jack, hello. It's Will. Can you fill me in on what's happening? Really. Really? Well shit! ok, I will. Thanks... Ok, so now I'll try Paul .....Agent Krendler? Hello. It's Will Graham. Yes . Of course. Thank you. What can you Say? Yes, I see. I understand. I appreciate that. Really? Happy New a Year to you as well..... alright then that's intriguing, they're now doing a complete search of a Port Haven. He can't say more than that right now for obvious reasons. They got a warrant for Matthew Brown too. Apparently he had to be physically restrained when they served it. Do I sound sorry about that? I'm trying to. Couldn't happen to a nicer shit, could it?'

As they drive up to the house in Wolf Trap Beverly comes out of the front door onto the porch and waves. The dogs wait to mob Will and Hannibal, Cephy always following close behind Hannibal.

'Hey you! I talked to Jimmy who talked to the B team. One of the girls at Port Haven snitched on Abigail, she's got stuff hidden all over. Oh, sorry. Hello, welcome, come on in'

Hannibal and Will exchange looks as Beverly ushers them through Will's front door. He's hardly been away but there is evidence of Beau and Beverly all over the downstairs rooms. A

coat. A cardigan. Bev's bag. The contents of Beau's pockets. Will decides not to investigate too closely.

'Paul Krendler says they had to detain Matthew Brown. He resisted the search warrant'

'Couldn't happen to a nicer guy'

'We seem to have a consensus on the current fate of Mr Brown'

'You alright Hannibal?'

'I believe so. I shall be more careful to consult more widely before I make that kind of impulsive offer in future'

'Have you spoken to Freddie Lounds?'

'No, but Jack is going to do it'

.....

They finish coffee and Hannibal stands ready to depart. He and Beau shake hands, Bev hugs him 'Happy New Year Hannibal'.

They watch Will walk Hannibal out, see them stand by the car talking for a few minutes and then see them exchange a heated embrace and kiss. Hannibal seems reluctant to leave and in the end it is Will who opens the car door and virtually pushes Hannibal inside. Even so they speak through the rolled down window until Will leans down into the narrow opening and kisses Hannibal through the tight space. He steps back from the car and stands and watches Hannibal pull away.

Will watches until the car goes through the gates at the far end of the property line. He turns around and kicks at some loose gravel. Finally he walks back to the house. He comes back indoors and a Bev pulls him into a hug

'Hard to say goodbye?'

'The worst'

'You going to be alright later?'

'Yeah. Better now I know Matthew Brown is in custody and Abigail is being detained in solitary at Port Haven. I'll be fine. When do you want to head off?'

'Maybe a bit before dinner? Beau says he's going to cook. Is that a good thing? I can't tell?'

Will laughs, 'now you're really trying to make me jealous. Are we going to have some cake, dad? Is there cake, let's have cake'

.....

Later in the evening, just before Will turns in, he speaks to his dad briefly, and then Bev. Sounds like they are happily ensconced in her apartment now her room-mate Stella is away. Will's head is bad again. He's lying on the opened out couch, it's a bit odd to have a night completely alone. Not bad, just odd. He switches on the bedside light and turns off the overhead. Starts to read.

When Hannibal calls they spend a good forty minutes talking quietly to one another. Though Hannibal seems to have regained some of his bounce. Good. Just before he switches off the light Will ties himself carefully by one wrist to the frame of the couch. Hopefully it's enough.

.....

In the morning Will packs a bag and gets together the Christmas presents he has for Mischa and Chiyoh, as well as a small gift for Julia and Tonio. He's arranged for the dogs to be collected and that goes off without a hitch. The taxi he has booked comes to collect him to take him to the bus station and it turns out to be the driver who brought the take out food a few days ago. They chatter cheerfully for the forty minutes ride and exchange happy New Years. He only has 30 minutes to wait for the Greyhound.

The Greyhound that drops him is the last of the day and the last of the year. When he gets out he stretches his legs and walks around, he has an hour before a taxi is due to pick him up and take him to the cabin.

Chiyoh's texted him to say they will be out to dinner until about 11:00pm. She's going to find a way to modestly detain Hannibal, and Mischa is going to be about 5-10 minutes ahead and Will will meet her in the cabin. He knows where to find the key. The idea is that Hannibal and Chiyoh will come in and Will and Mischa will already have drinks poured and be talking as normal.

Will finds a bar that is open, celebrating New Year, soon to arrive on the big screen linked to Time Square. Now he's only an hour away from springing the surprise on Hannibal he feels a kind of fleeting apprehension. It all depends on how much Hannibal hates the deception versus how much he loves the surprise.

It had been touch and go whether Will would make it or not. The weather front had moved in across the coast the evening of the 30th. Greyhound had been threatening to cancel some east coast routes. Not surprisingly that was hugely unpopular and the company had crumbled as the worst of the snow failed to materialise.

It had taken seven hours and Will had managed to sleep most of the way. He'd had a text from Donald Sutcliffe telling him to come in for results from the scan on the 4th. At present he's assuming that he'll come back with Hannibal on the third. Unless Hannibal is really pissed with him.

He slowly drinks a double of a half decent whisky over ice. Partly keeping an eye on the time, partly reading a paperback book he'd had stuffed in his pocket, reading between snoozes on the bus.

The bar is gradually filling up but Will is left pretty much alone. Five minutes before the cab is due he finishes up his drink, shoulders his bag and leaves the bar.

Outside in the cold it is just beginning to snow again. It's not too bad now, but more and steadily. He grins to himself. Getting snowed in with your lover is one of those tropes of popular fiction. Still, Hannibal's and his isn't the most traditional of romances. So he'll take it.

The taxi driver is friendly, he sort of recognises Will from the summer, maybe from Julia and Tonio's place, maybe for more FBI shaped reasons. They chat companionably, Will glad for the distraction knowing that in less than an hour it will be clear how good or bad an idea this is. He has a quick worry about what it might have been like if everything hadn't been resolved. Well, as resolved as it could be.

For the last few minutes of the journey Will slumps a bit in the seat, afraid they might pass the little party returning from the bar. Will finds he has a kind of clarity that once he is inside the cabin everything will unfold very fast.

He pays the cab fare plus extra for the day and hour and goes to hunt for the key. Letting himself in he switches on a couple of lights and leaves his bag in the entrance hall. Not obstructively, just there if you pay attention.

He gets out four mugs, puts on the kettle, finds the teapot. He forces himself to sit on a stool at the central island, and takes a few deep breaths. None too soon as he hears the front door and the sounds of a coat and pair of shoes being divested.

Mischa slips into the kitchen and they hug warm and friendly but quietly.

'They're about five minutes behind me. Are you alright Will?'

'Yes, bit nervous. You?'

'The same'

'Been ok so far?'

'Yes. He's apologised again for not resolving everything sooner'

'Ok. Penitence might work in our favour. Ok. Now I feel a bit sick'

'It will be completely fine, I'm almost totally positive'

'I hope so'

Mischa sits down beside him at the island and puts her arms round him, lays her head on his shoulder. They hear the front door then Chiyoh's low voice and Hannibal's answering laugh. Will and Mischa look at each other in a kind of desperate conspiracy. She keeps her arm round him as first Chiyoh and Hannibal round the corner.

For a moment both Will and Mischa think they might have misjudged. Such a rush of conflicting emotions over Hannibal's face. He tries for a few words. Fails. He rubs his hand

over his face. He tries again. But still can't find them.

Will takes pity on him and hops off the stool and pulls Hannibal into a close embrace 'Happy New Year Hannibal'.

He starts to cry then.

Not much, or for long, but long enough for them to know how affected he is. He finally manages to speak,

'How long?'

'Nearly two months'

Hannibal just stares at them 'everything? You told him everything?'

'Oh yes. Of course. Every little bit'

Hannibal sits heavily on one of the tall stools still holding onto Will's arm just in case he might suddenly vanish otherwise.

'How?'

'Notes through a book in the library, and most recently a text from Chiyoh'

'You knew too?'

'Much more recently. I was compelled to promise'

'And we keep our promises Hannibal. You should kiss Will before he thinks I made a bad mistake in planning this'

Will manages to look at him with his best helpless puppy face, a look Bev has categorised as a 'I'm so cute you know you want to fuck me five minutes ago' face. It seems to have that effect on Hannibal. He turns to his sister and Chiyoh

'Please excuse us for a few minutes' almost dragging Will into the room he had failed to use at all earlier in the year. They both hear Mischa laughing behind them.

Once inside the room with the door slid closed Hannibal begins by holding Will's face between his hands. He is about to speak when instead Will leans into him and kisses him, pulling Hannibal closer. The kisses became more heated as both of them lose themselves a little in the experience of the other.

When they break apart Hannibal searches Will's face carefully.

'I find there are a number of things I wish to ask. And at the same time I recognise that the answers are not particularly necessary to this moment. You continue to surprise me and surpass all my expectations'

'Good. Let's try for more of that later. I've time off until the 7th, did I tell you that? Donald says the results will be back on the 4th. You ok with that? Here with you until the 3rd?'

'More than "ok"'

'Good, lets go and reassure Mischa. Don't be hard on Chiyoh she wanted to tell you. She was very reluctant'

'I am glad I can rely on one person in this household'

'Yeah. I'll have to work on suborning her to my evil plans'

'Will' Hannibal stops him 'I am very glad you are here'

'Yeah? Me too'

.....

At midnight they drink Russian Champagne and eat caviar on blinis. Will gives Mischa and Chiyoh their Christmas gifts, both of them surprised and pleased. Mischa has an empty photo album divided into the 12 months with a flyer or tickets for an event slotted into each section. Along with the album there's an instant camera and twelve boxes of film.

'The plan is that we go to these events and the album is to, I dunno, scrapbook it or just throw in some photos' he grins at her,

'Oh yes. This is lovely. A perfect present, I like this very much. Oh thank you Will'

Chiyoh is surprised and flushed to receive a beautiful skill shawl in jewel colours decorated with Eastern European folk motifs.

'Thank you Will. This is very pleasing' she wraps it round herself and it instantly brightens her normally somber features.

They talk and laugh together and after they retire to their respective rooms Will and Hannibal discover the pleasure of breathless sex in a room that doesn't just feel as though the walls are paper thin, but where they are actually made from paper.

'How do they manage in Japan?'

'They are much less concerned with the propriety of such acts'

'That explains the shunga then'

'Although Japanese erotica is somewhat different from contemporary Japanese pornography which tends to lean towards more western sensibilities'

'Fewer tentacles?'

'So I believe'

'You're better than an octopus'

'That's a fine compliment to be paid, were I so minded it would make an amusing button pin'

'I remember saying something about doing the full geisha thing back when we were here last'

'I wondered if you would recall that'

'I said it to be funny. But, a part of me meant it. To look after you like that.'

'Perhaps this is something we might explore at a later point?'

'Really? God. Who knew you'd be such fun'

'Nor have I forgotten the black satin and lace' Hannibal crinkles his eyes at Will, who's not quite sure if this is intended humorously.

Will looks at him steadily 'Hannibal if that is something you'd like you only have to say. I'd give you pretty well anything'

Hannibal laughs 'oh, you shouldn't say such a thing to me. What might I ask?!' Then he realises that Will is serious, so he considers for a moment 'perhaps then there are a number of things we could discuss and explore together. I admit to having run to more, ahh, vanilla expressions of sexuality. But I am an ambitious man. Is this something you would welcome?'

'I told you Hannibal. I want to know what you want. I want to give you what you want. If I can I will. Right now I want to see if I can make you be less eloquent in at least two languages. How would that be?'

'If you can manage not to squeak'

'Wow, are you squeak shaming me? That's so out of line!'

Hannibal makes Will shut up with a firm kiss. And a pull on his re-hardening cock.

'Now I feel self conscious about squeaking!'

'Will, your squeak is adorable. I am very attached to it. It is also rather loud. I am concerned for our neighbours'

'Ok, ok. Just don't do... eeek!'

'Oh. I see, or that?'

'Squeak'

'Definitely not this?'

'Squeak!!!' Fuck. Hannibal. That's. eek. God. Not. Squeeeek. Fair!'

In the morning Will is mildly embarrassed when Mischa teases that the cabin seems to have mice.

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In the afternoon the four of them go to Indigo's mother's house for afternoon tea. She was married to a Japanese American so there's a strong South East Asian influence around the house. Will remembers what Mischa said about Chiyoh and Indigo but they both behave with such impeccable reserve it's hard to tell what the nature of their relationship might be. It occurs to Will that if they spend more time with Mischa then maybe Chiyoh will be able to recover some of her own life here?

It makes Will smile to himself. It's a nice idea. He can see that Hannibal is relaxed and content. Especially good after the strain of the last few days, weeks, months. He feels almost ok. Apart from his head, his feelings of low level anxiety over everything to do with Matthew Brown and Abigail Hobbs, the visual hallucinations (Garrett Jacob Hobbs waves from the piano stool, beside the bonsai, and from the doorway) , and the sleepwalking (not last night, yay, go Graham).

In three days time they will finally get the results. Will is still desperately clinging to the hope that the cause is somehow organic, biological. The various drugs he's on have helped somewhat, but when he stops to consider it, and isn't that just crap that he's usually he's so overwhelmed he can't even think about how he really is, he feels pretty dreadful. God it'd be great if it could be just one less thing to worry about.

He smiles, and readily answers a question from Indigo's mother about the dogs. This he can handle.

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On the 2nd the weather front that has been threatening comes in and dumps two inches of snow down the east coast. The household wakes up to a white blanket smoothing out the edges of the world outside.

Will receives a text from Agent Krendler *Dr Graham it would be helpful to hear from you regarding the recent incident please call me as soon as convenient. Thank you. Paul Krendler*

As he sits drinking his first coffee of the day he calls

'Agent Krendler? Will Graham. Yes. Thanks. You too. Ok. Really? Yes, here too. What would you like to know? Jack did? That's right yes. That's right. I understand. The 4th? In the afternoon. Sorry not the morning, mandated doctor's appointment. That's right. Alright. Will he be there? I see. Alright. He told you that? Ok. Fair compromise. Good enough. Back tomorrow. Thanks again Agent Krendler, ok, thanks, Paul, bye'

He takes a long slurp of coffee and then makes a note in his cell to remind him of where and when.

'What did Agent Krendler have to say?'

'They've found a storage unit in the name Abigail Brown. They're keeping it sealed until the 4th. They'd have gone in but two of the reserve techs fell on the ice this morning, so now they're trying to scout reserves for the reserves. But. The holidays. So, they're sticking it on ice. I'll get it fresh. Matthew Brown will be there, but in a squad car. Oh, and he didn't challenge the doctor's appointment at all!'

'Good, he shouldn't. I might end up preferring him to Jack if he's this reasonable'

'He's just not under the same pressure yet. You wait, if the Ripper starts dropping bodies he'll change his tune'

'I imagine we all might'

'That's the truth'

Hannibal pauses for a moment 'Do you have any preferences for breakfast?'

'Do you have something in mind?'

'I could surprise you?'

'Knock yourself out. Have you seen Chiyoh or Mischa yet?'

'Chiyoh has gone somewhere with Indigo. She will be back for lunch. With Julia and Tonio, if that suits? They seemed to know you would be here'

'Yeah. Might have had to tell them because of the food order! I spoke to them at The Party'

'Your capacity for subterfuge astounds me'

'If you'd asked me direct it would have been very difficult for me to lie to you. But you didn't so I didn't have to'

'I did ask you what you might do over this period'

'Everything I said was true. I just haven't done the Netflix watch, or the dogs, or the ice fishing, yet'

'How very tricky of you. I shall have to be more specific in any enquiries I make. I am modestly surprised that none of you gave in, given the events of the last few weeks'

'You have no idea! Mischa basically left me a note which I picked up at The Party and that was it.'

'You said you had a text from Chiyoh?'

'Yeah. Apparently she phoned Quantico and some admin cover for the holidays gave her my cell and email. She baulked at my home address, so that's something I guess.'

'Sloppy though'

'Yup. She got a grilling for it. Chiyoh was very calm and persistent, apparently it rattled the woman. Her first time on the switchboard.'

'And her last, I imagine'

'Re-assigned to filing'

'Ahhh, purgatory rather then hell itself'

'Alright Beatrice. This is great by the way. Thank you.'

'You're most welcome. Do you have a sense of anything you might like to do today?'

'Sure. When Mischa gets up we're going to make snow people and dogs and stuff, and take pictures. You in?'

'I might be persuaded' Hannibal remembers the outdoor party when he thought of snow fights and castles. They day he kissed Will the first time.

'Please?'

'Remarkable'

'Have we any washing up gloves, or nitrile ones in your bag?'

'Let me check. How many pairs?'

'Three, us two and Mischa. Keeps our hands dry if we wear them over ordinary gloves when we're outdoors'

'Sounds like this is born of the intimate knowledge of chilblains and miserable cold hands'

'Nah, Dad told us it when we were little. Never had a problem. Watched others freeze though. Did you play in the snow as a child?'

'Once Mischa was about four and when I was home from boarding school during the Christmas period, then, yes'

'Good memories?'

'Scant. But yes. I believe so. Ask her too... My sweet, good morning, how did you sleep?'

'Very well, thank you. The ear plugs are excellent' she carefully doesn't look directly at Will 'what did you want to know?' she smiles at him now, he blushes slightly

'If you had good memories of playing in the snow?'

'Oh can we? Show me how the camera works. Can we use the phone too?'

'Excellent. Let's finish breakfast and then go outside'

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